The Mystery of Evelin Delorme

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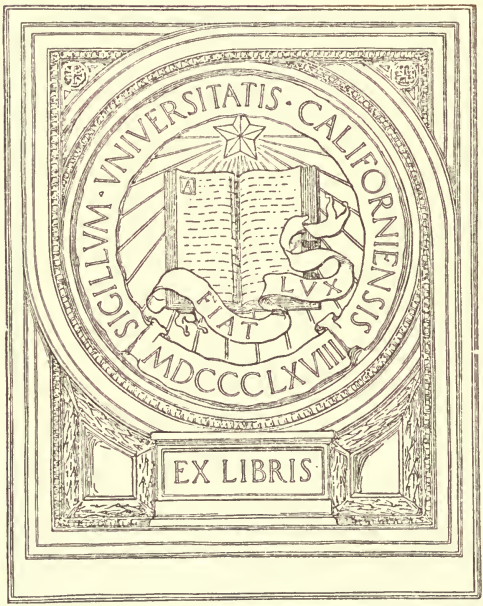
A Hypnotic Story

By Albert Bigelow Paine

Side Pocket Series

Arena Publishing Co.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THE MYSTERY

OF

EVELIN DELORME

A HYPNOTIC STORY

BY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

BOSTON
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COPLEY SQUARE
1894

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Arena Press

PS3531
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To HENRY J. FLETCHER.

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INTRODUCTION.

While engaged in writing the story of Evelin Delorme it was my good fortune to make the acquaintance of Dr. Herbert L. Flint, the well-known hypnotist briefly referred to in chapter three. The science of Hypnotism being a theme of absorbing interest to me, I eagerly availed myself of the opportunity thus offered for exhaustive investigation of the subject, and was accorded frequent and prolonged interviews with Dr. Flint. During one of these I reviewed to him briefly the outline of my story and the strange mystery of Evelin Delorme which had given rise to the plot. I saw at once

that he was unusually moved and interested. At my conclusion he arose hastily and left the room, returning a moment later with a quantity of papers which proved to be an unpublished memoir which he was then preparing. From this he hurriedly separated several sheets and placed them in my hand, remarking with suppressed feeling, "Here is the missing link in your narrative."

He has allowed me to publish it here in his own words.

EXTRACT FROM THE UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS OF DR. FLINT.

"The following is a brief account of a very curious case of hypnotic suggestion, and one which, because of the mystery surrounding its final outcome, has caused me no little anxiety.

"On the 9th of July, 1878, there came to my office in St. Louis a strikingly beautiful young

woman of evident wealth and aristocratic breeding, who gave her name as Eva Delorme. Her dress indicated recent bereavement, and her face impressed me as being that of one whom death had deprived of all those near and beloved. She stated her errand at once, and briefly. She had been pursuing the study of Mesmeric Sciences, and, believing herself a good hypnotic subject, desired that I make a trial with that end in view. A simple test convinced me that she was susceptible to hypnotic suggestion, and further experiment revealed to me that she was one of the most perfect subjects I have ever known. She called again the day following and asked me if it were possible, through the aid of hypnotism, to give to her a double personality; adding that she desired to become for a few hours a heartless, haughty, gay woman of the world —precisely opposite, in fact, to what she really appeared. Believing that she wished to forget her sorrow for a time, I assured her

that I thought this might be accomplished and that it would probably obliterate all knowledge of a previous existence for the time being. To this she eagerly consented, and after some further conversation concerning the details I asked her what name she desired to assume in her new character. She replied that her full name was Evelin March Delorme, of which, in her assumed personality, she would retain the first two. She likewise gave me a memorandum of a street and number to which she was to be directed; this being, doubtless, one of several of her dwelling properties, for she impressed me always as a person of abundant wealth. With a few passes I then placed her under the hypnotic influence, and while in this state I impressed upon her earnestly the fact that she would awaken a haughty and heartless woman of the world, dashing and gay, free from past regrets and future misgivings, as she had told me to do. That her name would

be Evelin March; and I repeated to her the street and number, and some minor details which she had given to me. That she would retain this personality for twelve hours. This I repeated to her several times, then bade her awaken.

"The change in her was complete and startling. Her whole expression — even her very features — appeared altered. Accustomed as I am to such things I could not avoid feeling somewhat nervous at this wonderful transformation. In her new character she was as beautiful and imperious as a queen, with a supercilious, almost coarse, expression of countenance. She seemed much mortified at the somber simpleness of her dress, and I judge went immediately to make changes.

"I did not see her again until a week later, when she came to my office, apparently restored to her true character. She had a vague semi-recollection of what had been her experience in the other state and desired a second

trial, to which I somewhat reluctantly consented, though I must confess I was by this time deeply interested in the case.

"These transformations were frequently repeated, during the next few months; then her visits ceased and I did not see her until a year later, when I was astounded one day to meet her riding in Forest Park *in her assumed character*, evidently having taken on the condition unaided, either unconsciously or of her own volition.

"I never saw her again, and as I had mislaid the memorandum of her address and the number had slipped my memory, I lost trace of her entirely. I have always felt a great and somewhat guilty curiosity as to the final result of this strange experiment."

THE MYSTERY

OF

EVELIN DELORME.

PROLOGUE.

JULIAN PAUL GOETZE died December 21st, 1885. This event removed the final reason for concealment of that strange story whose dark reality flung a shadow about his later years.

At his death Goetze was in his thirty-fifth year, and for more than a decade previous had been considered one of the foremost portrait painters of the younger school. I knew him intimately —was a frequent visitor at his studio, and, I believe, the only

confidant he was ever known to have.

As I recall those years there is an unreality about them that I am unable to dispel. The problems discussed — the theories maintained of life, death, art, poetry, and any number of other unfathomed subjects, appear to me now so preternatural — the conceptions of his wonderful brain so startling, that I can hardly realize having ever been a part, even though but a faint reflex, of that dazzling and unsated life.

In appearance he was no less remarkable. His figure was rather slight than otherwise, and of medium height. His features, though greatly modified, were distinctly those of the American Indian. High cheek bones, slightly aquiline nose, dark olive skin. His eyes and hair were a blue black. You would hardly

have called him handsome, but there was something in that fiercely intense face, in the lithe grace of movement, in the small and exquisitely shaped hands and feet, that made him a fascinating, if not a dangerous, companion for the other sex. All of these had been bequeathed him by his mother, in whose veins ran the French and Indian blood in equal parts. From his father, a fair-haired German, he had inherited only his name.

His nature was a strange blending of opposing forces, forever at civil war and each swaying him in turn. He had few friends, but those few adored him for his splendid genius and prodigal generosity, pitying his darker side.

When, as not unfrequently happened, he locked his studio and plunged for days into abject depravity, they sought him out and

led him back to his better self. After the culmination of that singular affair narrated in these papers, and for which he doubtless felt himself greatly to blame, these lapses became more and more frequent and protracted. The facts which I have collected relating to this period of his life were many of them gathered bit by bit as the events occurred, and later from brief interviews during temporary periods of consciousness just prior to his death.

It was in one of these that he apprised me of the existence of certain private papers, the contents of which would make the chain of circumstances complete. Then the fires that had blazed forever within him burned out his life. H. L.

St. Louis, Nov. 4th, 1890.

Note by the Author. — The above, accompanied by a manuscript roll of con-

siderable size, a crumpled and yellow letter torn in halves, and a number of loose pages covered with peculiar writing (unsigned, though evidently the work of the unhappy artist) lie before me. It is with hesitating and unsteady hands that I separate these silent voices of the past, and gather them at last together into a living though unworthy echo of my own.

I.

"A LITTLE more to the light, please — so; that is better." The artist worked rapidly; now and then letting his eyes rest for a moment on his sitter, then returning to the face on the canvas, that was rapidly growing under his hands.

The studio, a small Swiss cottage some distance from the business center of St. Louis, was rather richly, though plainly, furnished. The walls were tinted a neutral gray, an occasional piece of sober-hued drapery hung here and there, while a heavily curtained arch at the back connected with the artist's private apartments beyond.

On the opposite side of the room a door opened to the little

entrance hall, and near to this doorway was a carved oaken mantel, above which were grouped together a number of curious weapons, evidently gathered here and there as bric-a-brac, and used, perhaps, now and then, as properties, in the arrangement of some picture.

There was the long-barreled and elaborately ornamented gun of the Arab — the scimitar of the Turk — the blow-gun of the South American Indian — the bow and arrow of his northern brother. At the bottom of this array was a pair of French rapiers of the seventeenth century. The blades were crossed and rested upon a brass-headed nail, and upon this nail there hung, point downward, a jewel-hilted Italian stiletto or dagger, suspended by a silken cord.

The room was lighted by a skylight and one window — only the

light of the former falling upon the sitter — a large Japanese screen diverting all other direct rays. Through the half-open casement a light breath of summer crept in, from the little garden outside, freighted with the mingled odors of sweet-briar and white flowering locust. A yellow butterfly flitted in and out, now and then making a circuit of the room, resting here and there for a moment to fan noiselessly with its bloomy wings. A stray bee buzzed drowsily in, but, finding nothing so attractive as the sweets without, hastily retreated, striking heavily against the window-pane, where it sputtered and fumed for a time, and gladly escaped. Then all was silent in the room save for the light chafing sound made by the artist's brush against the hitherto untouched canvas.

He at the easel was a man of about thirty years — Julian Paul Goetze, a name already ranked high among his profession. His sitter was a woman of perhaps twenty-three. Her figure was somewhat above medium height and perfectly developed. She was clad in a plain, trimly fitting dress of silver gray, with a neat white collar at the throat. Her face was a perfect oval in its contour, her complexion almost childish in its delicacy. Her hair, a silky brown in color, was fastened in a knot at the back of her shapely head, while in front it was a fluffy mass that partially concealed the forehead, and softly shadowed what seemed to the artist to be the sweetest face in all the world. The features were as delicately chiseled as one would expect to find them in a statue of Purity. The eyes were

a deep gray, inclining to hazel, and the coloring of the cheek and lips so tender that the artist looked a little despairingly at the tints upon his palette; while through all there pervaded such an expression of absolute innocence and freedom from the world's taint, as to find expression in but the one word, saintliness.

And yet there was something about the face of his sitter that brought a troubled expression to that of the artist. As with bold, rapid strokes he laid in the groundwork for the hair he looked puzzled. As he traced the exquisite outline of the ear his look was almost one of vexation. Once he left his easel, and, going to another canvas that rested on the floor, face to the wall, he turned it partly about and looked at it intently for a few moments. Then he resumed his work, evidently

in deep thought. For awhile he painted on in silence. He was inclined by nature to be diffident at first with his sitters, and with this fair being the beginning of a conversation seemed to him a thing as difficult as it was desirable. There was a suggestion of weariness in her face, too, which he felt would disappear with awakened interest.

"I — I beg pardon," he said, somewhat abruptly at length; "have you ever had a portrait before?"

His voice was rich and musical, and the face before him brightened.

"Oh, no! And it is only by accident that I am having one now. I was passing and saw your name; I knew it by reputation, and it occurred to me all at once that I would sit for my picture. Perhaps I should have waited and

worn a different dress. It was only a passing impulse. It never occurred to me before; I cannot tell why it did now."

The animation and the faint blush that had crept over her face while she spoke were enchanting. The artist was delighted.

"Your dress could not have been better chosen, and the impulse was surely an inspiration," he said, smiling; "and perhaps," he added, "you may have a friend or — a — a relative who has had, or — is having a portrait, which suggested the idea."

As he paused he looked at her inquiringly. The look of weariness had returned to her face.

"No; I have no relatives, and"— she blushed deeply and was silent.

"Forgive me," he said, earnestly; "I did not intend to be inquisitive."

She did not reply in words, but as she lifted her eyes there was a tenderness there that awakened within him all the sympathy, the nobleness and the affection of his purer and better nature. Their eyes met, and in a single moment there was formed between them an invisible bond which both felt and neither sought to conceal. No word was spoken. The artist painted on in silence; but a new light had come into his sitter's face, and a new source of inspiration into his own heart.

For a long time neither spoke. A dreamy hush seemed to creep in with the sweet odors from the garden, and, with them, a summer restfulness and peace. The yellow butterfly that had been hovering about them, flitting this way and that, came closer and closer, and at last settled fearlessly upon one of the gloved hands that lay

folded in the sitter's lap. She watched it for a moment, then looked up at the painter with a smile.

"The insect has a true instinct," he said, gently; "it has no fear of capture."

"No; I should only hurt it and destroy its beauty."

"Butterflies," said the artist, "are like beautiful thoughts. They hover mistily about us, flitting away whenever we attempt to capture them; and if at last we are successful we find only too often that their wings have lost the delicacy of their bloom."

"Yes; I have felt that many times."

While she spoke the insect rose hastily in the air as if frightened, and, circling about for a moment above them, darted out through the open window.

"I have heard they are emblems

of inconstancy, too," she said, thoughtfully, as it disappeared.

A faint glow of crimson suffused for an instant the olive face before her, but he forced a smile and did not reply.

The rest of the afternoon slipped away with but little interchange of words between artist and sitter. When either spoke the words were few and simple, but there was a tenderness in their voices that uttered more than the spoken syllables.

The face on the canvas was growing rapidly. He had already worked longer than he usually did at the first sitting, and yet he could not bear to let her go. He had seen her for the first time less than two hours before; he did not even know her name. The little white card which she had given him he had glanced at without reading. He had only seen

her features, and heard only the gentle voice that had made known her errand. And now he wondered if it were possible that only a few hours before she had had no part in his life; a life wherein there had been many lights and shadows, and the shadows had been ever as broad and somber as the lights had been bold and brilliant.

II.

An hour later Julian Goetze was standing alone in his studio. The sketch fresh from his brush was before him, and beneath it, resting upon the floor, was another somewhat farther advanced.

He had painted until the light had begun to grow yellow and dim, then he had reluctantly told his sitter that he could do no more for that day.

"And when shall I come again?" she had asked.

He would have said, "Come to-morrow," had he dared; but remembering other engagements, and knowing that the work could not be continued so soon, he had hesitated before replying.

"I can go on with the picture in two or three days; come as soon after that as — as you wish," he said, softly.

Their eyes met for a moment; the delicate color deepened in her cheeks, her lips murmured a half inaudible word of adieu, and she was gone.

Julian left alone had flung himself into a large chair that stood near the window, and looked out upon the little garden beyond. It was June. The days were long and the sun was still touching the tops of the locust trees. He was away from the bustle of the city, and an atmosphere of peace almost like that of the country was about him. All at once he covered his face with his hands, pressing his fingers hard into his eyes.

"I love her, I love her," he groaned; "she is an angel from heaven, and I — oh, my God! if she knew she would hate me."

He rose and stood before the face on the easel; then, as if suddenly recollecting, he approached the canvas that was turned face to the wall, and which once before that day had claimed his attention, and, facing it nervously about, placed it beneath the other.

It was the portrait of a woman. Like the one above her, she was fair and beautiful; but here all resemblance apparently ceased. Nothing could be more widely different than the characters that had stamped themselves upon the faces of these two.

The picture on the floor was that of a woman whose age might be anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five; a woman of the great world of fashion, of folly, of intrigue, perhaps of vice. Her dress was a rich ball costume, exposing the white flesh of her beautiful arms, her perfect shoul-

ders, and her pearly tinted throat and bosom. Like the other, her face was oval in shape, but seemed less perfect in its contour. There was a certain lack of delicacy and softness about the outline that suggested the fierce chase after the sham pleasures of the great social world.

The rest of the features were in harmony with this idea. The beautiful mouth was hard and cruel. The lips and cheeks were bright as if artificially tinted, or flushed with wine. The eyes were bold and the pupils seemed expanded as with belladonna. The nostrils of the finely shaped nose were full and sensual. Her luxuriant brown hair, singularly like that of the portrait above her in color, she wore in the late French mode, combed back from her high, broad forehead and twisted into a massive device at the top. Her

eyebrows were unnaturally dark. An artificial air pervaded the entire picture — one felt that she had an artificial soul. A perfect prototype of Folly's feverish and heartless world.

As the artist stood gazing from one to the other, the curious vexed and puzzled expression that had come into his face once before that day returned. He approached closely to the work as if to examine it more minutely. As he bent low over the face on the easel he heard the street door open. He started guiltily, and hastily turned both pictures to the wall. A moment later a tall, fair-haired man of about his own age entered without knocking. It was Harry Lawton, the artist's most intimate friend.

"Julian, old boy, how goes it?" he said, cheerily.

"Pretty well, Harry; come in."

"Yes, I should do that any way. I don't seem to be any too welcome, however."

"Nonsense, Harry, of course you are welcome; I am very glad, in fact, to see you, just now."

"Well, that's better; although I must say your face doesn't indicate excessive joy."

"Sit down; not there — here by the door; I want to show you something."

"Oh, some new and wonderful work of your transcendent genius, I suppose. By the way, how is the picture for the Salon getting along?"

"Tediously, Harry; I seem to have lost the spirit of the thing."

"Found too much spirit of another kind, perhaps."

"No, not that. I have been a model of abstinence of late."

"And the heavens do not fall?"

"No — yes — that is — let your

tongue rest for a moment, please, and use your eyes."

While the artist had been speaking he had taken the large screen from before the window and moved his easel into a stronger light. Upon it he now placed the two portraits in their former position. The effect upon the other was vigorous and immediate.

"Heavens! Julian, where did you get that angel and that dev— I beg pardon, that extraordinary pair of beauties? Oh, I see!— why, of course! a new idea for the Salon. A modern Guinevere and Elaine; Siren and Saint; Sense and Innocence. I congratulate you, old boy; they are wonderful"—

"Please be quiet for a moment, Harry; they are not for the Salon. They are two sitters of mine. The one beneath has been here twice — the first time about

a week ago; the second time day before yesterday. The other came for the first time to-day."

"And they are real, live women, then?"

"Yes. I was in hopes you might recognize one or both of them."

The other shook his head, and gazed from one to the other in silence.

"Do you see any — any resemblance between them?" asked the artist, after a pause.

"Resemblance! Good Lord, no! Why? Are they related in any way?"

"Not that I am aware of; in fact, I am quite sure they are not. She told me she had no relatives."

"Um — and which do you refer to as she?"

"Oh, the upper one, of course."

"Well, I don't see any 'of

course' about it. She was here to-day for the first time. I don't see why she should begin by exchanging family confidences. All things considered, I should have thought it more than likely you referred to the other. However, I suppose you are familiar with her family history, too."

"Don't be sarcastic, Harry. I know nothing of either of them; at least not in that way. The one who came first gave her name as Evelin March. She came in suddenly, one morning last week, and asked for a sitting. She had on a light wrap, which she laid off and stood before me as you see her. During the sitting she was inclined to be lively and talkative. Her voice is just a trifle harsh, but she is a remarkably brilliant talker and a very fascinating woman. I had not met the other, then, and fool-

ishly allowed myself to say some rather silly things to her. When she came again I did more. You know what a rash fool I am, Harry. Well, I made love to her, off-hand. She stirred me up terribly for some reason. Of course, there was nothing of real love in what I felt for her; it was a brief madness of the head. You know about what I would say under the circumstances."

"Oh, perfectly. You swore that her eyes were as arc lights in a midnight desert; that her tints would rival the roseate pearl of a June sunset; that her smiles would be your only diet henceforth and forever; that her frown would be as terrible as the day of judgment. And now what has the other one to do with it?"

"Lawton, you will think I am crazy, and I am, perhaps — but I love her; and more than that, I

believe she loves me. No word of it has passed between us, but — we understand."

"Oh, we do, eh? We — we understand," imitated Lawton. "Well, this is exceedingly interesting, I must say, although quite the thing to be expected from one of your temperament. How very fortunate you are in the choice of subjects, too."

"What do you mean, Harry?"

"Well, I should judge you might divide up your affections on those two without any serious confliction of sentiments."

"You are mistaken, though; I do not care for Evelin March at all, now. I am sorry I ever met her. I shall stop this foolish flirtation with her, at once."

"Quite likely. And when does Evelin come again?"

"To-morrow, perhaps."

"So; well, I'll just drop in

to-morrow evening for the latest. Evelin seems to be a trifle outclassed just at present."

"Harry, you are unkind. I tell you I love that innocent girl on the easel there and mean to marry her."

"Oh, of course; I haven't the least doubt of it. And now, what about the resemblance?"

"Why, look! do you see their hair? The shade of each is exactly the same — the same silkiness and glow through it; it is very peculiar. And notice the ear; the outline and formation of each is identical. You may not have noticed these things as I have, but it is very rare that the ear is anatomically the same in two people. There is a similarity, too, about the oval of the face, although less marked and not unusual; and there is a faint suggestion of something else,

which I feel but cannot locate. I noticed these things, and they struck me at once as being a tie of kinship. I hinted, in a miserably awkward manner, as to relatives who might be having their portraits painted. It was then she told me that she had no relatives, and I believe started to tell me she had no friends, but she hesitated and was near bursting into tears. From that moment I loved her; I shall love her always."

"Charming, Julian. And yet I fancy she is not wholly alone in the world. A beautiful and affluent maiden is not calculated to be friendless; and you will admit that one who is able to gratify a passing impulse for one of Julian Paul Goetze's justly celebrated portraits is not likely to be destitute. Still, I will allow that there are cases, even among the wealthy,

that are not entirely undeserving of sympathy; and, if I may judge from this incipient work of your magic brush, I think I should be willing to lavish any amount of that article on its original. However, you haven't told me her name as yet; I trust it is not disappointing."

"I do not even know it myself. She gave me her card; I laid it down and haven't thought of it since."

"Well, really, if your love is no greater than your curiosity, your case does not present any very alarming features, as yet."

The artist had approached a small table in the center of the room, from which he now picked up a slip of white pasteboard and held it to the light, then he started a little and was silent.

"Well?" said his friend, inquiringly; "is it Mary Mullally or Nancy Muggins?"

The artist turned to the table again and selected another card, somewhat larger, from a little silver tray; then he returned to Lawton and held them before him, one above the other, like the pictures. On the lower one, written in a bold, dashing hand, were the words:

EVELIN MARCH.

And on the other, in a neat and beautiful penmanship:

EVA DELORME.

"Capital, old fellow!" exclaimed Lawton. "There is an air of harmony about the name, the handwriting, and the face of your charmer that is delightful. What a blessing she has no relatives."

"But do you notice nothing strange about these names, Harry?"

"Nothing, except that both are strangely bewitching. What more is there?"

"Why, the similarity of the first names. Eva — Evelin; one is frequently a contraction of the other. I don't like this, Harry; it troubles me."

"Now, Julian, you are positively absurd. Here are two women of natures manifestly as different as light and darkness. By a coincidence, or a distant family tie, or both, their hair happens to be the same color (not a very unusual one, either, by the way); a similarity in their names; also, perhaps, one or two other trifling resemblances, more or less marked. I will admit, myself, that there is something in the face of that siren that had she kept herself unspotted from the world might have suggested the other — that rare being there on the easel who told you she had no relatives or friends, and for which reason you are deeply troubled.

It is probable she told you the exact truth. I have seen people who were almost counterparts of each other between whom there existed no known tie of kinship. There was once a man in New York who resembled Jay Gould so strikingly as to deceive their best friends. And besides, the girl may have relatives of whom she knows nothing. Most of us have cousins whom we have never seen, or even heard of. Should Guinevere prove to be the unknown cousin of Elaine, I cannot see that the purity and charm of Elaine is in any manner affected thereby."

"Yes, Harry; that is so. Besides"—

"Besides, the resemblance is positively trivial. No one but an artist would think of it. I should never have suspected it without your assistance. In the

one face there is written all that is good, and pure, and holy; in the other, all that is reckless, unscrupulous, soulless, and if not vicious might easily become so. It does not take a physiognomist to see that. I beg pardon for saying so, Julian, but it seems to me that there is no more similarity between the two than there is between the opposing elements of your own strange nature. The one all that is good, and the other, well — not all that is bad, but very different, you know, old boy. And it is probably these forces within you that answer to the charms of these two beings who are so manifestly opposites. The one inspiring only the nobleness of a blameless love; the other suggesting the abandonment of a reckless passion."

III.

THE light in the studio was growing dim. Goetze had risen to his feet and was walking back and forth in front of the portraits. When he spoke he seemed to have forgotten them, except as the representation of an abstract principle; or, perhaps, he was thinking of his own nature, and what his friend had said of it.

"Good and bad are relative terms only," he said, as one pronouncing a text. "Every man fulfills his purpose. I can put a stroke of paint on my canvas, and you will call it white. I put another beside it, and by contrast the first appears gray. Still another, and the second has become gray, and the first still

darker. And so on, until I have reached the purest white we know. It is the same with humanity. Men are only dark or light as they are contrasted with others; nor can they avoid the place they occupy on God's canvas any more than my colors can choose their places on mine. The world is a great picture. God is the greatest of all artists. His is the master hand — the unerring touch that lays on the lights, the half-tones and the shadows. Each fulfills its purpose. Without the shadows there would be no lights.

"What is true of masses is likewise true of individuals," he continued, after a moment's pause. "In a landscape, every blade of grass, every pebble, has its light and its dark side. If you see only the light side of an object, it is only because the shadow is turned from you. It is so with men;

one side is sun, the other shadow. Sometimes the light, only, is presented to view, but the darker side is none the less there because unseen. Nature is never unbalanced. Whatever of brightness there is toward the sun there must be an equal amount of shadow opposing, with all the intergradations between. If the light is dim the shadow is soft; if the light is brilliant the shadow is black. Some of us are turned white side to the world, some the reverse; some show the white and the black alternately."

The man in the chair settled himself comfortably to listen. He liked nothing better than to see the artist in his present mood, offering a word now and then that was likely to draw out his peculiar ideas.

"You believe in fate, then, and the absence of moral freedom," he said, reflectively.

"I believe nothing. Belief is not the word. What is, is right. To assert otherwise is an insult to the Supreme. He is all powerful, hence — wrong cannot exist."

"I should be glad to hear your argument in support of that position."

"Argument! It is a self-evident truth! Argument is not necessary! Argument is never necessary! If an assertion is not true no amount of discussion will make it so, while the truth requires no support."

The other had lighted a pipe, and was smoking lazily.

"Well," he said, as the artist paused; "at least those who have crossed over have solved the mystery."

"Oh, they have! And how do you know that anyone has crossed over? You do not believe in the mortality nor the slumber of

the soul ; no more do I ; but time exists only with life. A man dies and in the same instant opens his eyes upon eternity, and yet a million of years may have been swept away in that instant. As a tired child you have fallen asleep. A moment later you have been called by your mother to breakfast. And yet, in that moment of dreamless sleep, the long winter night had passed. Adam, the first man, closing his eyes in death ; you and I, who will do the same ten, twenty, forty years hence, and the generations who will follow us for a million years, perhaps, will waken to eternity, if there be a waking, in one and the same instant of time, without a knowledge of the intervening years. There *were* no years. Eternity has no beginning, no end, no measurement."

He paused a moment, then suddenly burst out again.

"Nothing in life is real — it is all a dream. You think your being is reality and that you hear my voice speaking. I tell you it is but fancy. We are the figures — the mimes in some vast hypnotic exhibition — the shadows in some gigantic spirit's disordered dream. Hypnotism," he continued, pursuing a line of thought which his impulsive words had suggested, "has, in fact, proven that no one can distinguish the real from the unreal. You remember, when we went to see Flint, the great hypnotist, how his subjects passed from one condition to another and took on any personality at the operator's will; capering and grimacing about the stage with all the characteristics and even the facial expression of monkeys, one minute, and simpering as silly schoolgirls the next; and to them it was

all real — as real as this room, these bodies, these pictures are to us. I read some lines once that seemed to express the idea:

I sometimes think life but a dream
Of some great soul in some great sphere,
And what appear as truths but seem,
And what seem truths do but appear."

He repeated these words with slow earnestness, adding solemnly, "Who knows? Who knows?"

The man who sat listening drew a long breath. He was a rich idler with a good deal of worldly wisdom, but he loved and admired his erratic friend. He felt that much of what he said was sophistry, wholly or in part; but there was a charm about the earnest manner, the musical voice, and the flashing brevity of state-

ment, more pleasing to his ear than sounder logic from a surer reasoner.

It was nearly dark now in the studio. The artist halted in his march, and offered to light the gas.

"Not for the world, Julian; I am far too happy in the dark. I was just thinking what a glorious agitator you would make; you would carry all before you. I wonder you have never dabbled in politics or socialism. Now I think of it, I have never heard you mention these things. I suppose you belong to one or the other of the great parties, however."

"Politics? Party? Good heavens, no! I never meddle with such things; it is one step lower than I have ever gone."

"But a man must stand somewhere. He that stands nowhere stands upon nothing."

The artist paused before the open window and stood looking out upon the dusk of the little scented garden. A faint reflected glimmer from some far-away lamp dimly illuminated one side of his face, silhouetting his striking profile sharply against a ground of blackness.

"If you mean," he began, slowly, "that I should have some opinions, then I will tell you what they are.

"I believe neither in tariff nor trade. Currency nor coin. Traffic nor toil. I believe in *nothing* — but the absolute freedom of every living being. Freedom! — freedom from the curse of creeds, the blight of bigotry, and the leprosy of the law. Freedom to go and to come, to live and to die. Life without loathing, love without bondage. To live in some sunlit valley, where the bud is

ever bursting into flower, the flower fading to fruit, and the fruit ripening to sustenance. The untouched bosom of Nature would yield enough for her children had not the curse of greed been implanted in their bosoms."

Goetze had turned away from the window and was again striding up and down the floor in the dark.

"A beautiful poem, Julian," said the other, dreamily; "but a sort of delightful barbarism, I'm afraid."

"Barbarism? No! A higher, purer intellectuality than we have ever yet known — a civilization that knows not the curse of avarice nor the miseries of crime — the weariness of wealth nor the pangs of poverty. The garden of Eden is still about us, but we have torn up the flowers, and desecrated it with the lust of gain. Man was never driven out of that

garden. Greed was planted in his heart and he destroyed it.

"Come," he continued, suddenly changing the subject, "I have made you tired and hungry; let us go out, somewhere, to supper."

"Thanks," said the other, laughing; "I supposed a man in your condition had no need of bodily sustenance. You are comfortably situated here, Julian," he added, as they passed out into the street.

"Yes, it is quiet here — no bother with servants nor landladies. Once a week my washerwoman comes and stays to put my establishment in order; the rest of the time I am disturbed only by my sitters."

"You forget *me*."

"Yes, Harry," said the artist, taking his arm affectionately; "and by you, of course."

IV.

When Julian Goetze arose the next morning he felt strong within himself to withstand and conquer those fierce impulses of his savage heritage that had answered to the blandishments of Evelin March. And yet he was greatly troubled. He felt that in a large measure he had been to blame. He blushed hotly as he recalled some of the things he had said to this woman whom Harry had called a siren.

"Men are all scoundrels," he said, savagely; "I wonder if there are really any who are not so at heart."

He rapidly formulated his plan of action, and even the sentences

with which he was to meet and conquer this modern Circe.

"I will keep Eva's face before me," he thought, "and I will treat her coldly. She is high-spirited and keen; she will notice the change at once and resent it. She is too proud to demand an explanation."

He felt himself equal to the ordeal. He was anxious now for her to come that it might be safely passed. As the hours went by he grew impatient; he placed her portrait on the easel and fancied the original was before him. He went through an imaginary dialogue with it in which he was wholly victorious. He no longer felt any emotion for this woman.

"I will begin a new life," he said, as he strode rapidly up and down the room; "a new life." But there was a feverishness in

his voice that did not bode well for his resolution.

"I wish she would come," he muttered, fretfully.

His cheeks were hot and flushed, and his hands were like ice, and trembling. And the result was — that he failed — failed miserably and completely. When, an hour later, Evelin March entered the studio and, throwing off her wrap, stood before him, imperious, soulless and beautiful — a delicate odor, as of pansies, from her white flesh, stealing into his brain — his pledges of faith and his fair resolves melted away like walls of mist, and the face of Eva Delorme shrank back into the silent recesses of his heart, and only a small voice within him whispered, "Coward — traitor — fool."

She glanced at him sharply.

"Something troubles you, *mon*

ami. You are not overjoyed at my coming. I have been fancying to myself how impatiently you were waiting."

His hands were no longer trembling. He was calm enough, now, but it was the calmness of defeat — of having yielded to the inevitable.

"I have indeed been waiting impatiently," he said, smiling. "You see that I have been even consoling myself with your picture," and he pointed to the easel.

"From an artistic point of view, only, I fancy."

"That is unkind. I have been holding a conversation with it that I fear I should hesitate to repeat — with the original."

"How interesting! A rehearsal, perhaps."

"Perhaps; and I was testing the powers of my work as compared to those of the original."

"And with the result" —

"That my work is a failure."

"How humiliating! May I ask in what way?"

"I could withstand the charms of the picture, but with the original" —

"Well, and with the original?"

"I failed."

The face before him was radiant; but down in his heart the small voice, growing very faint, still whispered, "Coward — traitor — fool."

That evening Harry Lawton found him sitting gloomily before the window looking out upon the shadows that were gathering in the little garden beneath. As the door opened he glanced up and nodded without speaking.

"Circe came?"

Again the artist nodded.

"And conquered?"

Another nod.

"Did you suppose for a moment that she wouldn't?"

No answer.

Lawton assumed a dignified attitude, and began with mock earnestness:

"Oh, wise man — thou who knowest so well the heart and the face of Nature — how little thou knowest of thine own soul!"

A shade of anguish swept over the artist's face, but he made no reply.

"Most gentle and gifted man! Last night I listened long and patiently to the scintillating wisdom of your wonderful brain. Let me now speak, while you, in turn, give ear.

"When, last night, you showed me the portraits and told me their history, I foresaw this moment. You are plunged into despair at the contemplation of

your own weakness. You have been abusing your soul with hard names. Now, I would whisper to you with great gentleness that what you observed to me last night, about the sunlight and shadow of every life, is true; and that the brightness of the sun cannot illuminate, but only intensifies the blackness of the shade. Pursuing the same line of reasoning, I add that flowers bloom in the sunlight, while mushrooms thrive in the darkness. That because man is fond of mushrooms is no reason why he should be deprived of flowers. That because your purer and spiritual self reaches out for the stainless lily, is no reason why your material and grosser nature should be left starving. Because you are for a time intoxicated with Evelin March is no reason why, in your calmer and nobler existence, you

should not love truly and sinlessly, Eva Delorme.

"I am aware that my logic is not wholly in accord with generally accepted theory. It accords much more nearly, perhaps, with universal practice — of course I refer only to men in the single walks of life. It is well known that all men after marriage are irreproachable. And when you have plucked your stainless lily, you, like the rest, will subsist only upon its fragrance. But really, for the present, I cannot see that your affair with Miss March in any way conflicts with your sentiments for Miss Delorme; and especially as you have known the latter but a few hours in all — hardly sufficient, I should think, to inspire a lifelong devotion. Truly, Julian, I would advise you not to take matters quite so seriously, and let the

tide drift as it will for the present."

Throughout this long harangue Julian Goetze had listened in silence.

"Oh, Harry," he groaned, as the other paused, "you don't know what a traitor I am!"

"Well, possibly my sensibilities are not over fine, but I think you will be more comfortable for taking my advice."

Without replying, the artist rose and going into the adjoining room returned a moment later with a decanter and glasses.

"I am tired," he said, apologetically, as he caught the look of disapproval in his friend's eye; "it will do me good."

"None for me, Julian, before supper, and -- I don't think, if — if I were you, I would take any, either."

"I am exhausted, Harry; I am

not going to supper and I need it," he said, fretfully.

The other sighed and did not reply. Goetze filled one of the glasses and drank it off, then he resumed his seat by the window. A little later his friend took leave of him; reaching the street door he hesitated as if about to turn back, then he lifted the latch and passed slowly out into the lighted street, closing the door gently behind him.

The next morning the studio of Julian Goetze was locked. It remained locked all day, and within, stretched upon the floor, unconscious, lay the gifted man, and by his side was an empty flask.

V.

PERHAPS Julian Goetze did not willingly abide by the somewhat fallacious reasoning of his friend. It is more than probable that each time he succumbed to the savage elements of his nature, he did so with reluctance and shame, with subsequent remorse, and good resolutions formed a score of times, perhaps, to be as often broken.

As the weeks went by he became more and more involved in this singular affair. In a way he had found it possible, as his friend had once suggested, to be in love with two women at one time.

When he was with Eva Delorme his love for the pure, beautiful girl seemed to take entire

possession of his life. Evelin March, for the time, was as hateful to him as his own weakness, or was wholly forgotten.

When in the presence of Evelin March his better self shrank away before the fierce heredity within him, and the face of Eva Delorme became only a dim, haunting ghost that taunted him with his treachery.

Of the lives of these two he knew absolutely nothing. The evident distress which his reference to relatives and friends had occasioned Eva during their first meeting, had caused him carefully to avoid the subject afterward; and the other, who had never referred to her family, he had not cared to know. He had never even considered whether she was wife, maid or widow, until he suddenly became aware that the sentiment he had awakened within

her was not, as he had at first supposed, a passing fancy, but a fierce passion of jealous and tyrannical love. She no longer rallied him, and parried his compliments with her light, pointed sarcasm, as she had done at first, but assumed an unmistakable bearing of ownership and possession — questioning him closely regarding other sitters and female acquaintances — while he writhed helplessly in the exquisite misery of a spell which he felt himself powerless to break.

Thus far he had never surrendered himself entirely to this passion. More than once he had hesitated on the very brink of the precipice. Whether it was the haunting face of Eva Delorme that stayed him, or something in the manner of the other, he could not tell.

One day he suddenly caught

her in his arms. She suffered his embrace for a moment, then drew away from him.

"When we are married, Paul," she said, tenderly, "I will take you to Italy, where in some beautiful villa we will give ourselves up wholly to our love. I am rich, Paul, rich; and it is all yours, but we must wait."

He turned white and was silent. The thought of marriage with this woman had never entered his head. He had already asked Eva Delorme to be his wife. She had long since confessed her love for him, but had deferred her answer from week to week, and with such evident distress of mind that the young artist felt that a secret sorrow lay heavily upon her life. He longed to fly with her to some far country, away from it all, and from the dark shadows that encompassed his own.

The similarity of features which he had at first noticed in his two sitters was at times almost forgotten; at others it had recurred to him and haunted him like a nightmare. More than once he had imagined he saw the fleeting something in one woman that reminded him of the other. He had dallied over the portraits, making them photographically minute for comparison. He had hesitated guiltily about showing either of these to the other woman. He had sometimes longed, and always dreaded, to see them side by side in person. They did not always come at their appointed time, and he was in constant terror lest they should meet in the studio; and yet the thought had in it a fascination for him that made him feverish for its realization. It was strange that they had never met in his

rooms — he did not realize, perhaps, how strange.

As the months slipped away, and he had become more and more distracted by the contending forces that were eating deeply into his life, he had grown almost indifferent to his curiosity and only dreaded their meeting.

It was now October. The portraits had been practically finished long since. Day after day he had resolved to send that of Evelin March to the dealer for framing. He felt that he could then break away from her. But still he had hesitated and lingered, and now, when in a moment of recklessness he had taken a step nearer the brink of the precipice, she had spoken to him of their marriage. The idea stunned him; he could not reply. She believed his emotion had been caused by her rebuff, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"Don't be angry, Paul," she whispered.

He had never seen her so subdued and beautiful as she was at that moment. He was nearer to loving her than he had ever been.

"Yes," he said, with some agitation, "we must — wait."

That night after supper he sought Harry Lawton, and unburdened himself.

"What shall I do, Harry?" he said, piteously; "what *must* I do?"

"Marry Eva Delorme and take a year's trip to Europe."

"But Eva hesitates — she has never yet given me a decided answer."

"Insist upon it. Then take her to the preacher at once, and fly."

"Oh, Harry, what a villain I am! Evelin is really in love with me, and I have given her just cause. I never saw her look as she did to-day."

"Nonsense! She is a schemer and an actress. I did not suppose she wanted to marry you, but since that is her idea I can see right through her. This being the case, and your determination to marry the other fixed, the sooner you do it and get away, the better."

"I am afraid you are right, Harry; there seems to be no other course. I haven't the moral courage to tell her the truth."

"No need of it, whatever. It wouldn't help matters in the least. Just marry and go away quietly, and don't return until you get ready. If you need money draw on me at sight."

"Thank you, Harry. I expect Eva soon. I am going to put the final touches on her picture, and I will urge my suit. If she accepts me I will take her away

at once. Evelin's picture is ready for framing; I will send it to the dealer's to-morrow. I wish to God I could get away before she comes again!"

"Why not? You have nothing to keep you. If the girl really loves you she will marry you out of hand, and be only too glad to cut loose from all unpleasant associations. And now let's take a last look at the pictures," he said, briskly.

They had been walking slowly in the direction of Goetze's cottage. They entered now, and the artist lighted the gas. Then he arranged the portraits of the two women as he had done for his friend's inspection nearly a half-year previous. Both were thinking of that evening now. How long ago it seemed. Harry sat silent before them for a long time.

"They are wonderful portraits, Goetze," he said, at length; "but, do you know, it doesn't seem to me that they have quite the artistic value of the first sketches."

"You are right, Harry; they are too minute. I shall destroy some of that to-morrow."

The other was silent. After a long pause he said, thoughtfully, "There *is* something — I can't tell where it is, either; but it is certainly there."

"You refer to the resemblance?"

"Yes; it is hardly that, however."

"I have thought very little about it lately. It troubled me terribly for a while."

"Well, good-night, Julian," said Lawton, rising. "If there are to be any orange-blossoms, I suppose I am best man."

"Yes, Harry. Good-night!"

Two days later, when Eva Delorme came to the studio, the artist thought he had never seen her so beautiful.

And now the whiteness of his own soul was turned to view. He resembled as little the man who had trembled before Evelin March, as Evelin March was like this beautiful being before him.

With all the ardor and fervid eloquence of his nature he urged his suit; and she, tearful and trembling before him, half consented. He caught her to his breast and covered her face with kisses.

"My darling — my darling," he murmured, "we will leave this smoky, dingy city; I will take you to a beautiful land where the flowers never fade and the air is forever filled with their fragrance. Where the blue skies of an eternal summer are above us, and the blue waves of a whispering sea

shall lull us to peace. There is a tiny island in the Mediterranean on the coast of France. I was there once; it is like heaven. I will take you there. Say that you will go, sweetheart; we will start to-day."

The girl lifted her face to his, and kissed him on the forehead.

"It would be heaven, indeed, Julian; but — we must wait."

The artist started and grew pale. Her final words had been the same as those used by Evelin March. She did not seem to notice his emotion, or mistook its cause.

"You know that I love you, Julian," she continued, "and I will do anything for your happiness; but — oh, Julian" —

She burst into tears and hid her face on his shoulder. He felt that some mystery of grief weighed upon her, and he longed

to urge her confidence, but refrained. He soothed her gently with tender words and caresses. By and by she grew calm.

"Julian," she said, "I am in no condition to-day to give you a sitting. I will come to-morrow, and then — I will give you a final answer, and — oh, my love, do not urge me further to-day; I — I cannot endure it."

Then suddenly throwing her arms about his neck she pressed one fierce kiss upon his lips and hurried from the room.

After she was gone the artist walked up and down the studio for a long time in deep thought. He was wildly happy in her love, and yet he was troubled. It was strange that her words should have been the same as those of Evelin March. Her manner, too, during the last moment had been unusual. Something about it

had jarred him — almost reminded him of the other woman. What was it between these two?

By and by, he noticed something white lying on the floor. It was a woman's handkerchief — a bit of cambric and lace exhaling the delicate odor of violets. He pressed it to his lips repeatedly, and whispered her name over and over, then hid it away in his bosom. He had not noticed, in the dim light, that in one corner, in small, delicate letters, were the initials, E. M. D.

VI.

THE next morning was bright and crisp, and the artist felt better than he had for many weeks. He arose happy in the thought that he should again see Eva Delorme so soon, and in the confidence that she would accept his offer of marriage. He was happier still in the prospect of cutting free from all the feverish torture of the past few months; of leaving behind all the unpleasant associations that clouded both their lives, along with the soot, and fumes, and temptations of this grimy city; and of dreaming away the winter with Eva on the coast of France.

He rose early and set out for a morning walk. His favorite

restaurant was near the heart of the city; he would go there for breakfast. The distance was considerable, but the brisk exercise was in harmony with his thoughts. The blood was circulating rhythmically through his veins; he threw back his shoulders and breathed in the fresh frosty air. He wanted to sing. In another week he would be away from all that was disagreeable and disgraceful — perhaps to-morrow. They would spend a whole year in Europe; may be they would not come back at all.

After breakfast he met two or three acquaintances; they remarked his unusual spirits.

"You must have made a big strike, Goetze; can't you tell us?"

"Yes, by and by; not now — later."

"Congratulations are in order, of course."

"Hardly yet; pretty soon."

He returned to his studio. Eva had named no hour, but he hoped she would come early. As he opened the street door he saw a long, thin, delicately tinted envelope that had been pushed beneath it in his absence. He knew instinctively that it was from Eva, and hastened into the studio to read it. It was not sealed and there was no address. Trembling with agitation he tore off the covering and read:

"DEAREST JULIAN:

"I am feeling badly this morning, so will not come for my sitting to-day, and since my portrait is so nearly finished I suppose there is really no need of my coming again for that purpose. I should have come, however, as I promised, had it been possible. And now, my dear friend, as regards the decision which so concerns us both, I will ask your

kind patience until to-morrow eve.

"On West L — Street, between 18th and 19th, near the park, there is a large, old-fashioned, brick mansion. It is No. 74, east side — you cannot miss it. There is an arc electric light directly in front of it.

"Go to this place to-morrow night, exactly at six o'clock. If the door is fastened, ring, and the servant will admit you. There wait in the hall-way until I come. If the door is unlocked, enter and wait likewise, unless I am already within to meet you. Then I will give you my answer; and oh, my friend, if it be possible I will unfold to you the history and sad mystery of my poor life, which you have so kindly never sought to know.

"EVA."

Julian read this note again and again — now with pleasure, again with anxiety. Surely she meant to accept him or she would not have written thus; she would

not have appointed a meeting with him at this old mansion. And why at this old mansion? Was it her home? No, that was not likely, or why was he to wait until she came? If her home, she would be waiting there for him. Probably the home of some friend of whom she had made a confidant, and who was in sympathy with her love affair. Yes, it must be this; and the mystery of her life, what could that be but some pre-natal pledge of marriage with one whom she despised, or tyrannical guardians, or both. She would probably be disinherited if she disobeyed. What did he care; money was not the end of God's judgment. He would take her away from it all; his precious darling, and she was ill, too; she was in pain and he could not go to her. He longed to sit by her side, and hold her hand

and pour out his love. He was bitterly disappointed at not seeing her to-day, but he almost forgot that, now, as he thought of her ill and suffering. He read and re-read the lines of her letter, and tried to comfort himself with the thought that it was no more than a headache brought on by her mental strain.

By and by, something else about this letter began to puzzle him. He had not thought of it at first, but gradually it dawned upon him that the handwriting was not exactly like that upon the card of Eva Delorme. It seemed to him that it was less delicate and more irregular. He took her card from the little tray on the table, and compared them. He decided that they were the same, after all. The letter was written hurriedly and she was ill; but the formation of the charac-

ters was much the same. As he replaced the card his eye fell upon that of Evelin March. There was no similarity between the writing on the two cards, but as he glanced now from that of Evelin March to the letter he fancied one suggested faintly the nervous, dashing style of the other. The haunting curiosity that had once possessed him returned for a moment. There was a strange fear in his heart which he could not name. He compared the two more closely, and as he did so the fancy disappeared. It was like certain faint odors that are only perceptible at a distance. He heaved a sigh of relief.

"I am a consummate ass, among other things," he muttered.

His mind reverted to Eva. How would he get through the

time until to-morrow? To-morrow there would be a sitting with Evelin. As he thought of her his face flushed with shame, and a feeling of dread came upon him. He would send her portrait to the dealer to-day — it was finished — then there would be no excuse for her staying. No, he would go away and lock the studio all day. What a fool he had been to allow himself to be fascinated by her dashing beauty. What a traitor he had been to make even a semblance of love to this bold, flashy woman of the world — a woman who, until recently, had not even commanded his respect.

"I have been a villain," he muttered, to himself; "a villain and a traitor, but I will be so no more. I will curb this savage nature within me. I will abstain from drink. I will be a new man."

He sealed his resolution with a kiss pressed upon the little, tinted letter, then placing it in an inner pocket he arranged the canvas of Eva Delorme on the easel before him and walked backward and forward in front of it thinking, pausing now and then to gaze long upon the beautiful, saintly features.

"It does not do her justice," he said, at last; "there is something about the lips and the expression that I have not caught. It is too minute; I must darken the ground; there is not enough relief — not enough depth."

Hastily removing his coat and the wide felt hat which he always wore on the street, he hung them on a rack in the adjoining room, and donning his velvet studio jacket, returned to the easel. Seizing his palette and brushes

he fell to work rapidly, and with the enthusiasm of one who is in love with his task.

As he dashed on the broad sweeps of color from his palette, the background gradually assumed the effect of having faded away, and the rare face before it to have become a thing of flesh and blood. It was a marvel of skill. He had never done anything like this before. He became so absorbed in his work that he forgot the passing hours. The background of the portrait complete, he began adding touches of light and shadow and color to the drapery, to the hair, to the perfect features. He felt that he had never painted half so well. It seemed to him that he was inspired. He remembered the story of the artist who had painted the portrait of his beloved, drawing the tints so truly from

her life, that when he had finished and turned to look at her with an exclamation of triumph on his lips, she was dead. It seemed to him at this moment that he was drawing his tints from her very life. That the intense workings of his brain must in some manner affect her own. He paused and his hand trembled. She was ill; what if she were to die! Pshaw! it was but a fable. He would paint the picture as truly, but only that the world might bow before the beauty of his mistress. He would exhibit it in Paris, and the multitude would worship the beautiful face that should win him a world-wide fame. Then he would take it away from the gaping throng and lay it, with the fame it brought him, at her feet.

The little clock on the mantel had long since chimed noon, and the hour hand had crept around

the circle nearly to five before he finally laid aside his brushes and palette, and stepped back to view his finished work.

"It is wonderful — wonderful," he said, aloud. "Oh, my precious darling!"

There was a sound behind him as of some one choking. He turned and stood face to face with Evelin March. She was very pale, and her eyes burned like two stars.

"Who is that woman?" she said, fiercely.

He knew that she had overheard him, but he endeavored to address her calmly. He felt the cowardliness of his nature rising, and he cursed himself inwardly.

"I — I was not expecting you to-day, Evelin," he stammered; "to-morrow, you know, is the day for your sitting."

She did not take her eyes from the portrait; she had gone very

close to it and as she turned upon him to reply there was a mingled look of terror and ferocity in her face.

"No, it is quite evident that you did not expect me, and that you were too much absorbed to remember or care when my sitting was due. And now you will please to answer my question. *Who is that woman?*"

What would he not have given, at that moment, to have had courage to say, "She is to be my wife;" but the magnificent fury of the woman before him, and the recollection of the shameful words of love he had spoken to her, overwhelmed him.

"She is a—a Miss Delorme, I believe; a sitter of mine," he managed to say at last.

"You believe! You lie! You know who she is, and you love her! You love that nun-faced

baby! I heard your words. You believe — you " —

"Evelin, stop!"

"Don't speak to me, you traitor! 'Your precious darling.' Oh, I could kill her! I *will* kill her!"

He could not understand this wild fury, that seemed to be half inspired by a sort of terror. She had turned to the portrait again and was examining it, oblivious, for the moment, to all else. Then suddenly she turned upon him again with blazing eyes.

"I will kill her!" she hissed. "I could kill her with *that*," and she pointed to the jeweled stiletto on the wall.

She was so magnificent in her rage that he could not help admiring her through it all. The love for him which had aroused this tempest was so fierce that he felt his savage blood beginning to

throb with an answering glow. He felt that once more he was about to be a traitor to all that was good within him. The ground was slipping from under his feet. The glamour of her voluptuous beauty was filling his brain like the fumes of liquor. His eyes, too, were beginning to shine fiercely, but not with anger.

"Evelin," he said, "listen. You know I love you and have from the first. She is nothing to me. The words that you overheard were addressed only to the picture. It is my masterpiece. I was not thinking of the original." And down in his heart the small voice was whispering, "Coward — traitor — fool!"

But the hot blood of passion was sweeping through his veins, and he heeded it not. He put out his hand and laid it upon her arm.

"Don't touch me!" she said, angrily, but the expression in her eyes softened. He saw his advantage and followed it up.

"Evelin," he said, huskily, "I love you — I love you!" Again he laid his hand upon her and this time she allowed it to remain. They were standing near the curtained arch of the adjoining room. He parted back the heavy draperies, and gently drew her within.

The savage blood was rioting fiercely within him. He caught both her hands in his and drew her to his embrace. She hid her face upon his shoulder, and would not let him touch her lips. Other than this she made no further resistance. Half dragging, and half carrying her he approached a large divan that stood in a little alcove on the opposite side of the room. Suddenly he took

her bodily in his arms and they sank down upon it together. For a second, only; then, with a quick powerful effort she threw him backward and sprang to her feet, staring about her with a wild, startled look in her eyes.

Goetze, wholly at a loss to account for the suddenness and fierceness of the resistance, was for a moment stunned. As he recovered himself and made a movement toward her, she gave him one quick, piteous look — a look that recalled to him suddenly and strangely the beautiful, innocent girl whom he had wronged and forgotten — the *face of Eva Delorme* — then, as if seized with sudden panic she sped from the room, out through the dim studio and into the dusky hall-way beyond.

He heard the opening and closing of the outside door, and knew

that she was gone. Then the tide of reaction swept over him. The glamour of conquest had passed, and there remained only the shame, the treachery and the remorse.

With a curse of anguish he flung himself down upon the floor, and lay groveling with his face in the dust. The moments flew by unheeded. An hour passed. The electric lamps were turned on, and a white ray of light shot in through the half-curtained window. The little clock on the mantel chimed the hour.

The sound roused him. Starting to his feet he gazed stupidly about him for a moment as if undecided what to do, then seizing his hat from the wall rack he hurried out through the studio and the dark hall-way without pausing to remove his working jacket, or to lock the door.

Out into the street where people were hurrying home, chattering and laughing, and glancing only for a second at the figure in the velvet studio coat and broad hat, wondering a little at the dark, intense face that flashed so swiftly past them toward the glare and confusion of the business center.

He did not know where he was going. He did not care. He was trying to get away from himself. He walked faster and faster; twice he started to run.

He was drawing nearer to the bustle of the city. Small shops were scattered along between the rows of brick dwellings, and at one corner the light of a saloon flared out upon the pavement. Entering, he called for brandy. The bar-keeper stared at him and set out a bottle and a glass. Twice he filled it to the brim and

drank it off with hardly a pause between. Then, throwing down a silver dollar, he hastened out without waiting for change.

The shops were getting thicker and larger. Dwelling-houses were fewer and more old fashioned. Here and there newsboys were crying the evening papers. Street-cars, filled with lights and faces, rolled swiftly by him and in front of him, jangling their bells. The buzz and whirl of the city was around him. He was drawing near to its great, throbbing heart.

Splendid shop windows threw a flood of light upon the pavement, making it like day. The shouts of the newsboys and street venders, the jangling of the car-bells, the rushing cabs and carriages, the hurrying crowds, the brilliant lights, the liquor in his brain, all whirled together and sent the

blood racing through his arteries, tingling to the surface now and again in burning waves of misery and shame.

People paused for a moment to look at the strange figure, and hurried on. Everybody was hurrying — hurrying somewhere. He, too, was hurrying, as one pursued by furies; but where?

Suddenly, in front of an illuminated window, he paused; why, he did not know. There was nothing there to attract him. It was a place where they sold shoes. Numberless shoes were arranged for display, and in the midst of them a little white lamp-globe revolving by clock-work with two words painted on it in black letters:

GENTLEMEN'S SHOES.

He read the words over and over as the little globe came round,

and round, and round. "Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes." The thing fascinated him. It was such a funny little globe. It reminded hin of a merry-go-round he had once ridden on as a child. He wondered how many times a day it spelled out the words, and if it kept on going, there in the dark, after the place was closed. Then he hurried on, but the little white globe and its black, flying letters were still before him. They had impressed their image upon his brain. More than once he repeated the words aloud. They seemed to have blended themselves into his whirling senses and become a monotonous undertone.

"Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes—Gentlemen's shoes."

Here and there he stopped at a saloon and drank. He

drank deeply and the liquor was strong.

The lights were beginning to grow fewer. He had turned in his walk, and was leaving the whirl and glare behind him. He did not know what direction he had taken. He only knew that he was going, going, going, in a mad effort to get away from himself.

The people that passed him he did not see. He saw only the white face of Eva Delorme, and that piteous look in the eyes of the other, that had, in one instant, revived within him, and with tenfold vigor, all the strange, torturing suspicions he had once felt regarding these two mysterious lives. The faces that turned to look at him, he did not notice; he saw only these two, and mingled with them, and whirling round, and round, and round, the

little white globe with its black letters, "Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes."

After a long time he noticed that he was passing a small suburban railway station. There was a bustle of preparation as though a train was expected to arrive. He crossed the shining steel tracks and entered. A number of people were inside, chattering, laughing and waiting. Waiting to go somewhere. Everybody was going somewhere — everybody but him. Suddenly a group in one corner attracted him as had the lighted window and the revolving globe.

A hatchet-faced woman, wearing a faded straw hat of antique pattern, a cloak to match, and a soiled and largely plaided dress, was vainly endeavoring to still the cries of a miserable babe

swaddled in an assortment of dirty garments.

Two children, of ages evidently beginning at prompt and regular intervals from the one in her arms, extended from her at right-angles on the bench, their legs straddled about with a childish disregard of modesty. They were asleep — at least one of them was, and the other was equally silent.

By and by, the woman arose and walked the floor with the babe. At this, the child who was not asleep arose also and stared at its mother with wide, round eyes. Then, as she approached it and turned in her march, it began to follow her, keeping close behind and in step.

The other slept on unconsciously. The lamps flared and flickered; the babe, partially soothed, sobbed and moaned, and the squalid pair marched on.

Begotten in bliss — brought forth in suffering — reared in privation.

Suddenly there is a prolonged, shrill shriek in the night, a trampling of many feet, a shouting of discordant voices, and the midnight train is snorting at the platform.

Hastily the mother gathers up the sleeping child, and bidding the other cling close to her skirts, hurries out into the night, past the fiery-eyed Polyphemus, on toward the coaches behind.

The people that are going somewhere jostle against her in their haste to get into the coaches and secure seats. Mechanically the artist follows. Everybody is going somewhere; he will go, too.

The monster ahead begins to puff and grunt, and the bell that is fastened to its back, to ring wildly.

The men who are loading baggage shout and swear and hurl coarse jokes at each other, and the midnight train begins to move. The bell still clangs frantically, the demon puffs and grunts faster and faster, and the light from its one fearful eye penetrates farther and farther into the darkness ahead.

Faster, and faster, and faster — the sound of the wheels falling into a regular measure, until it has become a weird, rhythmical monotone.

"Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes—Gentlemen's shoes."

Then there is a momentary flare of light, a final, blood-curdling scream, and the one-eyed demon — the faded and soiled woman — the sobbing baby — the sleeping child — the marching child with the big, round eyes — the people who are going some-

where, and the artist who is going nowhere, are on their way.

He has taken a seat facing the faded woman, and is unconsciously studying her face. She is still hushing the babe to rest. On one side the sleeper is huddled up against her. On the other, next to the window and resting upon its knees, the child with the big, round eyes stares out into the darkness.

The coach is warm. The heat and the strong liquor are beginning to tell on him. The face before him begins to mingle with all sorts of impossible fancies. The roar of the flying train is in his ears, but it seems the roar of some mighty sea that is about to overwhelm him. The conductor, coming through, shakes his arm to rouse him.

"Tickets!"

"Oh, yes!"—he forgot. He

thrusts a bill into the conductor's hand. "Keep the change, I will ride it out."

The drowsiness is again stealing upon him. He still sees the wretched face before him and is studying it; but always between them are those other faces — the face of Eva Delorme and of Evelin March — and the piteous, frightened look that rests now upon one, now upon the other,— and now the two are melting — melting into one, like the blending outlines of a dissolving view — and both fade out into the little white globe with its whirling black words, that the hum of the train flying through the night keeps repeating over, and over, and over, — "Gentlemen's shoes — Gentlemen's shoes—Gentlemen's shoes."

VII.

THE sky was beginning to get gray with morning when the night express, more than a hundred and fifty miles from its starting point, rushed into a little station and halted a moment for water, panting and fretting to be on its way. A figure stepped from it to the platform, staggering a little as from the motion of the train. It was a young man. His eyes were bloodshot, his face stained with the grime of travel. His soft felt hat and his short, velvet coat were covered with cinders and dust. One would hardly have recognized the artist, Julian Goetze.

The station agent stood a few

feet away with a lantern. He looked up somewhat astonished as this odd figure approached him. "Some drunken showman," he thought.

The man came closer, as if to speak to him.

"How far back to Saint Louis?" he asked, anxiously.

"One hundred and fifty-three miles."

"When can I get a train?"

"At eleven-thirty, if it's on time."

"Is it usually on time?"

"Hardly ever; four hours late yesterday."

"Good God! Is there no other train?"

"There's a cattle train lying up there on the switch now. Pulls out soon as this one leaves."

"And what time will that reach Saint Louis?"

"No telling; depends upon

what luck it has; possibly by four or five o'clock."

The artist did not wait to hear more. Anything was better than remaining here on an uncertainty. He sped away up the track to where lay the long line of waiting cars.

He had been awakened by the stopping of the train, and a realization of affairs had flashed over him like lightning. He was far away from Saint Louis, and at six o'clock that night he had an appointment with Eva Delorme.

The effects of his self-abasement and the strong liquor had worn away. The fever and the delirium of last night were as a bad dream. He would hasten back to Eva. He had sinned — fallen almost to the lowest depth — but it was over now. He would see Evelin March no more. If Eva accepted him they would go away

at once. Oh, if kind Providence would but help him to reach the appointment in time!

The conductor whom he asked, noting his anxiety, assured him that it was quite probable they would reach the city by five o'clock.

It was growing light rather slowly. The sky was overcast with clouds, and the air had the feeling of a storm. It seemed to Julian that the train crept along like a farm wagon. For a long time he looked out at the gray monotonous landscape, then he lay down on the cushioned benches of the caboose and tried to sleep. Now and then he would doze a little, but his mind was too full of anxiety and impatience to obtain rest. Terrifying dreams forced themselves upon him, and he awoke often, sick and frightened.

And so through that dreary

autumn day the heavy train rumbled along across the wide stretch of country that divided him from that which fate was at that moment busily preparing — an experience as strange, as weird, as terribly fantastic as was ever accorded to human being before.

The little Swiss cottage of Julian Goetze was very silent that day. All through the forenoon no one entered, although the street door was unlocked and the studio door was open. As the afternoon wore away, the clouds and smoke that hung heavily over the city seemed to settle lower and lower, until within the narrow hall-way it was almost dark.

Just after the clock on the mantel of the inner room had chimed three, a cloaked figure passed through the hall and entered the studio. It was Evelin March. Her eye fell upon the

portrait of Eva Delorme still resting upon the easel, and she glanced about hastily for the artist. He was not there. For some reason she did not remove her wrap, but stood still, listening. A wagon rattled by outside, but within all was silent.

"Paul!" she called, softly.

There was no reply.

"He has stepped out for a moment," she thought; "he will be back presently."

She approached the face on the easel, cautiously, as though it were alive.

"I wonder who she is," she muttered; "I have seen her somewhere before — or I have dreamed it. He said it was his masterpiece. I hate her!"

She seated herself before the picture, studying it silently. Little by little a fear invaded her bosom — a strange fear, such as

she had never known before. A fear of this portrait, of the lonely room, of the weapons upon the wall. It seemed to her that something horrible was about to happen.

She started up and began to pace up and down the room to drive away this feeling. Why did the artist not come? She parted back the draperies and looked into the room beyond. He could not have gone far; his coat was hanging upon the rack, and his velvet studio jacket was gone. Entering, she approached the coat and put her hand against it in a sort of caress.

How she loved him! She seemed to have forgotten or forgiven the offered insult of yesterday. Turning back the garment she touched her lips to the silk lining where it had covered his heart. As she did so she

noticed the tinted edge of a narrow envelope in the inner pocket. In an instant she was seized with a passion of curiosity. All her jealousy and suspicions of the sweet-faced girl in gray came rushing back. She listened at the curtained arch for a moment, but there was no sound of approaching footsteps; then, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks flaming guiltily, she snatched the delicate missive from its concealment, and with trembling hands tore it from its covering. In another instant her suspicions were verified. The woman reading seemed suddenly to have become deranged.

"Coward! — liar! — cur!" she screamed.

She tore the letter in halves, crumpled it in her hands, and flung it upon the floor. Then suddenly becoming calm she gath-

ered up the pieces hastily and concealed them in her bosom. A look of peculiar cunning had come into her eyes.

"So he is going to meet her," she muttered, savagely; "but they will not meet alone. I, too, will go to No. 74 West L—— Street, east side." Then she hesitated. "Perhaps I would not be admitted," she thought.

Plans for overcoming this obstacle flashed through her brain like lightning. She seized upon what appeared to her the most feasible.

"I will counterfeit her," she said, feverishly; "I will disguise myself."

She hurried back into the studio and stood for a moment before the easel. Yes, yes; she could do it. Her figure was much the same, dress gray and plain, hair low upon the forehead — a veil would make it complete.

"Oh," she muttered, "how I hate your baby face! Look! I will kill you, you fool — you fool!"

Again that sickening, fascinating terror of this unknown woman came upon her. Hastily turning from the portrait she listened a second for the artist's step. As she did so her eye caught the weapons on the wall. Without a moment's hesitation she plucked the jewel-hilted stiletto from its place, and concealing it beneath her cloak hurried from the house.

* * * * * *

An hour later the artist burst into the studio. His bloodshot eyes, and face blackened with travel, made him almost unrecognizable. Hurrying through to his room beyond he glanced eagerly at the clock. It was on the stroke of five.

"Just time to make myself

presentable and reach the place by six," he thought.

Then, turning, he surveyed himself in a mirror.

"Good heavens, what a spectacle I am! People must have thought I was a maniac — and they were not far from wrong — but I am all right now. I am going to Eva and confess my villainy, and ask her forgiveness. I will swear my faith to her. She will forgive me — she must forgive me. And as for Evelin, all is over with her after what passed last night. Last night! was it only last night? It seemed an age."

He made a quick motion as if to drive away an unpleasant memory, then throwing off his outer garments he opened the door of a little dressing-room.

"I will bathe, and confess, and be born again," he said, with a little laugh.

Twenty minutes afterward he emerged a new man in reality—as far as outward appearances were concerned. Cleanly shaven and scrupulously attired, no one would have recognized in him the dusty, wild-looking figure of an hour before. He glanced at the clock.

"Yes — I have plenty of time," he thought. "No. 74 West L — Street, east side; I will look at her letter again to make sure. Bless her sweet face! I can hardly wait until I see it again. If she only is not ill, but — good God, it is gone!"

He had looked in the breast pocket of his street coat, that still hung on the rack; it was empty. He stood holding the coat, with a puzzled expression on his face, trying to think.

"I know I put it in that pocket — I recollect it distinctly," he

said, aloud; "perhaps it fell out when I took off my coat."

He looked hastily about the floor, then hurried out into the studio, searching rapidly and carefully. His face grew more and more troubled. Could anyone have come in during his absence and picked it up? Perhaps Harry had been here; if so, it was safe. As he stood there reflecting, trying to solve the mystery, he was looking directly at the weapons upon the wall. All at once he noticed that there was something different about their arrangement. Something was missing. It was the dagger! Then it all came to him. "Evelin!" he shouted. "Good God!"

He had wasted valuable time searching for the letter. He could hardly reach the place of appointment by six unless he could catch some kind of a vehicle.

"My God — my God! she will kill her — she will kill her! and all through my treachery."

He had fled from the house and was now speeding wildly westward. No cab was in sight and he could not wait to find one.

"She will kill her — she will kill her!" he groaned, over and over. "Oh, my God — my God!"

VIII.

At a quarter before six, a woman ascended the marble steps of the old mansion at No. 74 West L—— Street, east side. She wore a plain dress of silver-gray material, a rich Persian shawl, a neat walking hat, her face thickly veiled. Reaching the door, she laid her gloved hand on the knob, then hesitated, as if undecided whether to enter at once or ring.

The heavy clouds hung oppressively low, and it was already dusk. A few flakes of snow were falling, but it was not cold.

All at once the woman removed her hand from the door, slipped off her shawl and threw it across her arm. As she did so some

thing glittered bright, which she hastily concealed beneath the shawl. As she stood now she was the exact counterpart of Eva Delorme. Then without further hesitation she laid hold of and turned the heavy knob of the massive black door. It yielded noiselessly, and she entered, closing it as noiselessly behind her.

Within all was dark. A faint ray of light crept in through the transom, penetrating a few feet into the blackness. She stood almost against the door, listening and hardly breathing. All was silent. She had expected the other to be there before her, waiting for his coming. She put out her hand and felt about her. She touched a chair at her left and softly laid her shawl upon it, keeping firm hold upon the keen weapon she had carried beneath it. She listened again; still no

sound. She was growing impatient. She took a few steps forward, keeping one hand extended in front of her to avoid collision. Then she turned and retraced her steps.

She had been very cool thus far, but she was losing control of herself. Why did she not come? She had said in her letter that she was ill — pshaw! it was but a trick to arouse his sympathy. She must come — *she must come!*

She paced back and forth in the small space which she had explored and found free from obstruction. Three steps forward and turn — three steps back and turn; pausing each time to hold her breath and listen, while the fingers of her left hand involuntarily crept down and pressed against the keen point of the dagger until it pierced through her glove and entered the tender flesh.

Suddenly a white ray of light shot through the transom above her, falling at an angle against a projection in the wall at her left, and dimly illuminating the entire place. It was six o'clock, and the large arc light just outside was turned on. Then, as she reached the door and whirled quickly in her march, she saw her for whom she waited standing at the extreme farther end of the long hall. Between them was what appeared to be a narrow and ornamented archway.

She could dimly distinguish the figure clad in gray. The face, like her own, was veiled. She noticed with quick satisfaction that her disguise was perfect — the counterpart was exact even to the smallest detail.

Without hesitation, and concealing the dagger in the folds of her dress, she advanced quickly

and silently toward her rival, who, somewhat to her surprise, instead of fleeing or crying out, also advanced. She was going to try strength with her.

"I will kill her with a blow," she muttered.

They were now within a few feet of each other — the ornamented arch exactly between them. Suddenly Evelin March snatched the dagger from its concealment and raised it aloft to strike. As she did so her rival made precisely the same movement, and something glittered in her hand also. Both took a quick, forward step, and each, at the same instant, struck fiercely with a swinging, downward blow.

A hissing metallic report, a low moan and the sound of a falling body — then silence.

A moment later the hall door burst open for a second time, and

in the flood of electric light that poured in, Julian Paul Goetze saw a gray, veiled figure, stretched upon the floor, the gloved hand clasping a jeweled hilt, the blade of which was buried in her bosom. A stream of crimson was discoloring the fabric of her dress, and spreading in a dark pool on the rich carpet.

Rushing forward he caught up the prostrate form and tore away the veil.

Then, as if by magic, a revelation swept over him in one mighty wave of horror. *The strange, piteous look he had once seen on the face of Evelin March was again before him, and while he gazed he saw it melting — melting, almost insensibly, like the blending outlines of a dissolving view — into the saintly loveliness of Eva Delorme.*

The mists of doubt, the shad-

ows of suspicion, and the fever of curiosity that had troubled him during those feverish months, were suddenly swept away. Eva Delorme — Evelin March — one and the same. One body, one soul, one heart; by some strange freak of nature — some wild mental vagary or devilish witchery of which he could not know — made two in life, but only one in death.

Above her was a heavy French-plate mirror, in an ornamented frame, cracked entirely across. From its polished surface the self-aimed, glancing dagger had found its way to the one troubled heart of those two strange lives, and brought to it silence and restfulness forever.

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